

Guiding principles

This guide offers an approach to service provision that is **survivor-centred**, which prioritizes the rights, needs and wishes of the survivor. Survivor-centred care promotes the following survivors' rights.

- ▶ **Dignity and respect** – the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and not be blamed for the violence perpetrated against her.
- ▶ **Life** – the right to a life free from fear and violence.
- ▶ **Self-determination** – the right to make one's own decisions, including sexual and reproductive decisions; to refuse medical procedures and/or take legal action; and to choose the course of action.
- ▶ **The highest attainable standard of health** – the right to health-care services of good quality, that are available, accessible and acceptable.
- ▶ **Non-discrimination** – the right to be offered health-care services without discrimination, i.e. treatment is not refused based on race, ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, marital status, occupation, political beliefs or any other factor.
- ▶ **Privacy and confidentiality** – the right to be provided with care, treatment and counselling that is private and confidential, and to decide which information is included in one's records and for information not to be disclosed without consent.
- ▶ **Information** – the right to know what information has been collected about one's health and to have access to this information, including medical records.

In addition, promoting gender equality is crucial (see Box 1).

Box 1: Promoting gender equality

Important facts:

- Violence against women is rooted in unequal power between women and men.
- Women may have less access than men to resources, such as money or information.
- Women may not have the freedom to make decisions for themselves, including about their health care.
- Women may face the risk of violence based on their health outcomes (e.g. if they acquire an STI or become pregnant); they may not be able to share information safely with others.
- Women may be blamed and stigmatized for violence they experience and may feel shame and low self-esteem as a result.

Health-care providers must promote women's autonomy and dignity and, at a minimum, avoid reinforcing these inequalities by:

- being aware of the power dynamics and norms that perpetuate violence against women and how these may affect a woman's ability to safely access and continue to receive health care;
- being careful not to put her at further risk through your actions or recommendations;
- listening to her story, believing her, and taking what she says seriously;
- not blaming or judging her;
- providing information and counselling that helps her to make her own decisions; and
- supporting her autonomy – her right to choose what medical care and which additional services she accepts.